

Published on RedCounty.com on April 22, 2009

The Obama Administration's plan to close the Guantanamo Bay prison facility appears to be moving forward without any legitimate consideration for the potential consequences. When President Obama signed the executive order to close the facility - one of his first acts as Commander in Chief-he did so without any formal review of our nation's detention operations.

Now the Administration, as part of its FY09 supplemental funding request, is asking Congress to provide \$80 million in order to proceed with the closure of Guantanamo Bay. However, without a plan in place or any formal oversight of the complex issues surrounding its closure, Congress is obligated to withhold this funding until an appropriate course of action can be determined.

If the President is serious about closing Guantanamo Bay without jeopardizing our security, then the Administration needs to work directly with Congress to create a detention process that keeps detainees off U.S. soil and prevents terrorists from returning to the battlefield. In fact, in the time since the executive order was signed by President Obama, respective committees in the House and Senate have yet to hold a single hearing on issues such as the relocation of detainees, as well as the continuation of American detention operations in the war against global terrorism.

With these issues still unresolved, the Obama Administration is surveying domestic facilities and military installations, including Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, as detainee relocation sites. This would not only raise numerous legal questions -- unnecessarily complicating the detention process and threatening the safety of our communities - but also undermine the training and wartime missions that occur at these installations on a daily basis.

Our military men and women already carry tremendous responsibilities, engaging our terrorist enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan while protecting our security interests elsewhere. Transferring detainees to American military bases will only cause an unnecessary distraction and redirect important resources and personnel that would otherwise be used to prepare our military for combat.

Keeping Guantanamo Bay open and functioning as a detention facility is clearly within our security interests. Nonetheless, even if President Obama is unwilling to change his misguided and politically expedient decision to close the facility, he then must put forward a plan that

ensures detention operations continue without transferring terrorists to U.S. soil or threatening our nation's security.

Until then, Congress should withhold all funding for the closure of Guantanamo Bay.